the immediate future between General Sir Douglas Haig and General Nivelle, the question should be raised again by the French Government.[55]

I do not propose to give a detailed account of the difficult negotiations that led up to the final arrangements for the Nivelle offensive. That would occupy too much space. I have perused with arduous care the mass of correspondence, memoranda, and minutes which constitute the full record of what took place before the operations of April, 1917, commenced, and I propose to summarise them so as to give a fair and impartial impression of what happened.

Character of the plan

In what respect did it differ from all other "break-through" offensives which had hitherto made such a revolting panorama of gruesome failure?

The essential change of policy was in the element of surprise. Nivelle emphasised this factor as the main idea in his strategical conception of a successful offensive. The enemy must be attacked on an unexpected front at a time when he was not anticipating any operation in that quarter. He would therefore not have any reserves assembled and ready to beat off the attack. A break-through at that point would thus be less difficult, less costly and more easily exploited.

The preliminary bombardment at the critical point would be heavy but short and sharp. The offensive

as a whole would be on a much wider front than any attack yet staged. But its principal feature was that it would mystify the enemy as to the place of the main attack, and thus take the Germans completely by surprise. It was a brilliant strategical